# GOD
## *MANIFESTED* by his *WORKS*, AND Justified in his Dealings with MEN.

# A SERMON
PREACHED
At the Cathedral Church of SARUM,
Upon the 29th Day of *June*, 1677.

By *Paul Lathom*, Prebendary of the same Church.

Rom. 3. 19. *That every mouth may be stopped, and all the World may become guilty before God.*

*LONDON*,
Printed for *Rich. Royston*, Bookseller to His most Sacred MAJESTY, *An. Dom.* MDCLXXVIII.

Mr. Royston,

*THE Sermon, concerning which You are desirous of my Certificate, was here received from the Pulpit with so much applause and satisfaction, that I think it great pity it should perish and expire (as Sermons too often are wont to do) together with the Breath it was spoken in. It seems to me a proper Antidote (very fit for such People as live in irreligious Air to carry about them) against the Atheists and Scepticks and Unbelievers of the Times. To some 'twill be useful as a Remedy; to others as a Preservative; and (even without the help of Eloquence) has an aptitude in it self of being profitable to All; at least in the Hope and Opinion of*

Your Affectionate Friend
to serve You,
*THO. PIERCE.*

IMPRIMATUR.

GUIL. JANE.

Sept. 13. 1678.

# GOD MANIFESTED by his WORKS, AND Juſtified in his Dealings with Men.

Rom. 1. 20.

*For the inviſible things of him from the Creation of the World are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and God-head, ſo that they are without excuſe.*

THE Apoſtle profeſſing his readineſs and zeal to Preach and propagate the Goſpel, *v.* 14, 15. gives his reaſon for ſuch his inclination, *v.* 16. *for I am not aſhamed of the Goſpel of Chriſt: for it is the power of God unto Salvation both to Jews and Gentiles*: and *v.* 17. tells us, that *therein is the righteouſneſs of God revealed* in juſtifying the

World by *faith*. To manifeſt the neceſſity of which method in *juſtification*, he proceeds to convict both the *Gentiles*, and alſo the *Jews* of being *obnoxious to God's juſtice*, and ſhews them conſequently the need they had of a *righteouſneſs by imputation*.

The *Gentiles* he deals with at preſent and convinceth them, that *the wrath of God was moſt juſtly revealed from Heaven* againſt their profaneneſs and impiety, inaſmuch as they had not wanted for competent means of *knowledge*, but had *lived* much beneath the advantages they had enjoyed. And though they had wanted that *more ſure word of prophecy*, the holy Scriptures, yet they had the *Book of God's works* before them, in which much of God might be read; and whereby God had left them *without excuſe* in their ſins.

In the words I have read unto you, we may obſerve a *propoſition*, and an *inference*.

The propoſition, that *the inviſible things of God ever ſince the Creation of the World, have been diſcoverable by the things that are made*.

The inference, that *God hath left Mankind without excuſe, if they live and dye in their ſins*.

In the Propoſition are 3. Heads of Diſcourſe,

Firſt, What are the τὰ ποιήματα, thoſe *works of God*, by which the inviſible things of God are diſcoverable?

(2.) What

(2.) What are thoſe τὰ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ, the *inviſible things of God* that are diſcoverable by his works?

(3.) Why theſe are called *inviſible things*?

Firſt, For the τὰ ποιήματα, thoſe *works of God*, from whence the inviſible things of him are diſcoverable, they are of 3. ſorts: *Creation*, or giving a *beginning* to the World at firſt; *Production*, or preſerving each Species by the *propagation* of individuals: and *Providence*, or *upholding*, *governing*, and *providing* for each Creature in the Univerſe.

Firſt, The Work of *Creation*, or the giving a *beginning* to Heaven and Earth, and all Creatures therein, doth diſcover unto us the inviſible things of God: For,

(1.) Natural reaſon argues, that *none of theſe things could be eternal. One generation comes and another goes*: and reaſon prompts us to follow theſe ſtreams of ſucceſſive generations, till we find the Spring-head of the *firſt generation*: for otherwiſe we muſt engage our ſelves to defend an *infinity* in the Series of Generations, which will involve us in this *perplexity*. I demand whether at this *preſent* an infinite Series of Generations be already paſt? If you anſwer, yea: then I demand whether in the days of our *poſterity* it will not be *more* than an infinite Series that will have paſſed? If

not,

*not*, then a part is equal to the whole. If *yea*, then we have found a number *greater than an infinite*: both which are abſurd. If you ſay that at preſent an infinite Series of generations are *not yet paſt*, but in proceſs of time they *will become infinite*, then it will follow that a finite number added to a finite will make an infinite, which is alſo abſurd. Reaſon therefore will force us to own a *beginning of generations*.

(2.) And it was impoſſible for the firſt generation to *make it ſelf*, or be the *author of its own being*; and therefore we muſt ſearch after ſome *firſt cauſe* of all things. Reaſon explodes it as inconſiſtent to hold the *ſame thing* to be the *cauſe* and the *effect*: for if ſo, we muſt hold this contradiction, that the ſame thing is *in being* and *not in being* at the *ſame time*. *In being*, for otherwiſe it could not *work as a cauſe*: *not in being*, for elſe it could not be *produced* as an effect. A *firſt cauſe* of all things, or a *Maker of the World* muſt be therefore of neceſſity owned.

(3.) Nor could any thing *leſs than an infinite being* give the firſt original to things, or produce *ſomething out of nothing*. To make great *alterations* in the ſame matter by introducing various forms *ſucceſſively*, falls within the power of Nature or Art: But to produce any thing out of *meer non-*

*entity*,

*entity*, is to reconcile notions of ſuch infinite diſtance and diſproportion, as no leſs can do than an infinite Agent. Such an one therefore we muſt be forced to own in making things to ſubſiſt out of their *original nothing*.

(4.) He that duly ſurveys the *vaſtneſs* of this Fabrick of the *Univerſe*, muſt needs own an infinite power to be the Maker thereof. When we look upon a *ſmall portion* of the World, either through the obſcure glaſs of *ignorance*, or through the magnifying glaſs of *intereſt* and *pride*, we are apt to ſwell our Mole-hill into a Mountain: But if we compare our little Spot with the reſt of the habitable part of the World, how little is it! If the whole earthly Globe with the heavenly, how like a point it looks! And can we imagine any cauſe to have produced ſuch an effect, but ſuch as greatly tranſcends it, that is, an infinite being?

(5.) The vaſt *variety* of particular Creatures that are parts of the Univerſe, argues the ſame. If we ſurvey the various ſorts of particular beings that ſtock the *Earth*, the *Water*, and the *Air*, beſide thoſe *Heavenly Bodies* that adorn the ſuperior Orbs, it will lead us to an infinite *Intellect* that contained thoſe *Idea's*, after which every individual was formed, and to as infinite *Power* that extended it ſelf to ſuch variety of works at once.

(6.) The *usefulness* of all Creatures in some capacity or other doth argue, that no *fortuitous jumbling of atoms* did accidentally hit into matter thus formed; (as soon may we expect an heap of *Stones* to rise up and rally themselves into the form of a stately and useful *House*, or a Bag-ful of *Printing Stamps* to shuffle themselves into the order of words for the composition of a *Book*:) but that there was a Being infinite in *wisdom* to *contrive*, in *goodness* to *design* the good of the Universe, and in *power*, so as not to be *disappointed* in his design.

(7.) The admirable *nature* and *properties* of several Creatures leads us to an invisible power that made them. When I consider the *Heavens* and their various *motions*, the *Sun* and the *Moon* and other *Stars*, with their several *influences*; when I take a view of the mysterious properties of the *Loadstone*, and many other particular Creatures, I am forced to conclude that an *infinite being* was the Author thereof.

(8.) The excellent *beauty* and *harmony* of the whole *Creation* shews the same. The *Earth* designed to sustain and nourish *Vegetables*, those to afford sustenance to *Animals*, all those to be useful unto *Man*: The Earth to supply the Sky with *vapours*, and this to *water* the Earth and make it fruitful: All this discovers the *invisible things of God.*

Secondly,

Secondly, The work of *Production* tends to the ſame purpoſe. Nature hath denied to *individuals* a *perpetuity* of continuance: To recompence this, it upholds the *Species* by a *Succeſſion* of thoſe individuals that fill up the room of the former: And if this be duly conſidered, we muſt confeſs that *day unto day uttereth Speech*, that theſe conſtant works diſcover the inviſible things of God. For,

(1.) The *Seminal Originals* of all things that are produced, whether *Vegetables*, or thoſe things that are indued with *Senſe*, are ſo ſmall and diſproportionate to the things that ſpring from thence, that we muſt needs acknowledge that production differs nothing in wonderfulneſs from the work of Creation, but only that one is *common* and *daily*, the other was done but *once*: and this conſequently doth ſtrive with Creation which ſhall moſt painly ſhew us the inviſible things of God.

(2.) The *variety of forms* that are daily introduced into the altered matter is very ſtrange to him that conſiders it. Of all the *Faces* in the World not any two ſo alike but they differ in ſome *features*: yea of all the *Fruit* or *Leaves* on a Tree, of all the *Flowers* in the Spring ſome *diſſimilitude* may be obſerved: which is not to be

aſcribed to the *contingent jumbling of the parts of matter* amongſt themſelves, but muſt be acknowledged the work of him that hath hereby determined to ſhew forth his *multifarious wiſdom and power*.

(3.) The *wonderful properties* of Creatures produced, whether *Plants*, *Minerals*, &c. which renders them ſo uſeful to Man as *Food* or *Phyſick*, do ſhew that theſe things are not the product of any *contingent motion*, but are ordered by him that with infinite *wiſdom* doth deſign what is beſt, and brings to paſs what he hath deſigned.

(4.) The *Body of Man* conſidered in its various *parts* and *proportions*, the *fitneſs* of each Organ to ſerve the end for which it was made, the wonderful compliance thereof with the will in *ſpontaneous motion*, the various Utenſils and Veſſels that ſerve to the firſt, ſecond, and third *concoction*; this I ſay may force eſpecially perſons of reaſon and judgment to confeſs that we are *fearfully and wonderfully made*, and that *our ſubſtance* and contexture *was not hid from* an all-ſeeing eye, even when we were *made in ſecret*, and owed nothing of our ſelves to the *contrivance* of him that *begat*, or of her that *bare* us.

(5.) Eſpecially the *Soul of Man* conſidered in its excellent *nature* as a Spirit, in its admirable *faculties*

*culties* and *operations*, an *underſtanding* ſo large and capacious, a *memory* ſo vaſt and tenacious, a *will* ſo free and unforcible, a *conſcience* ſo apprehenſive and authoritative, *affections* ſo warm and active; this doth lead us to own a cauſe of an *higher nature* that made it, and that for ſome great and *worthy deſign*. Here therefore the inviſible things of God diſcover themſelves.

Thirdly, That work of *Providence* whereby the World and all Creatures are continually *upheld*, *provided for*, and *governed*, doth lead us to a Deity.

(1.) That the World thus long *ſubſiſts* is a fruit of the great power of God. The Univerſe was not ſo made at firſt as *automatous Engines* are made by the Artificer, who leaves them to move by the motion he hath *begun* in them. But the ſame *powerful word* that called forth all things into Being at firſt, doth ſtill command them to continue to exiſt. If we look into our own *Bodies*, the keeping of the *contrary qualities* in due temper, the upholding the motions of the *Blood* and *Spirits*, the maintaining of the ſeveral *Veſſels* in us that are paſſages of nature, do ſufficiently argue that we are not forgotten by the ſame power that remembred to give us a Being at firſt.

(2.) That

(2.) That every Creature is obsequious to the *laws of nature*, and still ready to comply with the design of its Creation, that the *Heavenly Bodies* continue their *motion*, that the *Earth* fails not of *vegetation*; yea, that every thing observes the time and season appointed for it, that the four Seasons of the Year do never change hands, that *the Stork, and the Crane, and the Swallow know their appointed times*, and *the Sun knows his going down*, this shews that there is an over-ruling power that takes care of that World which was his own workmanship.

(3.) That every Greature is *provided for* according to its nature, from the King that sits upon the Throne to the Captive that lies in the Dungeon, yea to the very insects that buzze in the Air; this argues that we are not left *Orphans* upon Earth, but there is a great Father of this vast *Family*, who doth with infinite wisdom and providence take care that no part thereof shall want a comfortable *sustenance*.

(4.) The upholding of *Government in Societies*, in Kingdoms and Families, whereby the good of Mankind is provided for; yea that all the Sons of *Belial and confusion*, have never been able to break in pieces this Ordinance of God, this argues that the World subsists not at all adventures.

(5.) The

(5.) The maintaining of *Religion*, and upholding a *Church* upon Earth, that *the gates of hell*, the power and policy of the Devil and his Instruments have never been able to prevail against this that is *founded upon a Rock*, that this *bush* hath so often *burned*, but is not yet *consumed*; yea, that this *Stone cut out of the Mountain without hands hath broken in pieces the Gold, the Silver, the Brass, the Iron, and the Clay*, that it hath *grown into a Mountain* and *filled the Earth*, this argues an invisible and irresistible power, by which the World and all occurrents are ordered.

We have considered those things that are made, by which that which may be known of God, is manifest. Let us,

Secondly, Consider what are those τὰ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ, the *invisible things* of him that are thereby seen. Here the word *invisible* seems to prompt me to present you with a *Curtain* instead of a *Picture*: but yet when the Apostle tells us that these invisible things *are seen*, those things that *Sense* cannot, *Reason* and *Faith* do discover, we may at least presume to look on the back parts hereof.

(1.) Then, the necessity of *owning a Deity*, an invisible and almighty power, which gave *beginning* to the World at first, which daily *produceth* all things to uphold their Species, which *rules* and governs

governs all things, this hath been ſo manifeſt by what is already ſpoken, that I ſhall need only to point with my Finger to it, as a Poſt already taken.

(2.) From hence alſo we diſcover that the Deity is perfectly free from all the *defects* and *imperfections* that are in any of the Creatures. For he that made both the Univerſe in general and every individual in particular in ſuch excellent order and perfection, cannot be thought to be either *ignorant*, *weak*, or *ill minded*; much leſs like the Idols of the Heathens that had *eyes but ſaw not, ears but heard not, hands but could not help themſelves, or their worſhippers.*

(3.) And further, that on the contrary the Deity is a Being *infinite* in all *excellencies* and *perfections*; for if every cauſe be in ſome ſort more *noble* than the effect produced by it, then the Maker of all things muſt not only be more noble and excellent than any *particular* Creature, but muſt comprehend greater perfections than all the Creatures *joyntly* can lay claim to.

(4.) That we are bound to own our *dependance* upon his *inviſible power*: though we are far removed from the firſt generation that ſprung out of the *Clay*, yet are we ſtill to remember him that gave the original to our Species: though we remember

member nothing of our forming in the Womb, yet are we to own that Power that formed us there: though we ſee not that Hand that upholds and provides for us, yet are we to own, that *in him we live, and move, and have our Being.* For this is a reaſonable acknowledgment from them that are endued with underſtanding to conſider cauſes and effects, and whoſe reaſon is convinced of theſe things by thoſe that are made.

(5.) That conſequently we ought to *ſerve* and *glorifie* God according to the capacity he hath ſet us in. For if a moſt wiſe Agent make nothing in vain, and if all other things do *continue to this day according to God's ordinance, becauſe they are his Creatures*, It muſt needs then be fit that reaſonable Creatures do ſerve God in a thankful acknowledgment of his mercies, and endeavouring to live in conformity to his Laws.

(6.) That we muſt be *accountable* to him for our behaviour in this World. His giving us *Reaſon* doth make us *capable* of obſerving *Laws*, and his infinite *wiſdom* will prompt him to look after the *obſervation* of theſe Laws, and to call us to a *reckoning* how we have diſcharged the duty we owe to him: We muſt therefore conclude that *he hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the World in righteouſneſs*: and that *for all theſe things God will bring us into judgment.*

Thirdly, Why are theſe called ἀόρατα, the *inviſible things of God*?

(1.) Becauſe God being a *Spirit* is *inviſible* to our *bodily eyes*. Nor doth this give any advantage to an Atheiſt either to *queſtion* his Being, or to *deride* him as imperfect, becauſe inviſible. We are as certain, or rather more, of that which is *demonſtrated* to our *Reaſon*, as of that which we *ſee* with our *eyes*. Nor are Spirits, or the objects of our other Senſes *leſs perfect* Beings, becauſe not diſcoverable by the *eye*. Yea the Deity is *therefore* perfect, and *like himſelf*, becauſe *tranſcending* the knowledge of *Senſe*.

(2.) Becauſe the *fall of Adam* hath obſcured our knowledge, eſpecially of the moſt *ſublime* Objects. *Scarcely and with much difficulty do we behold* and take cognizance of the *things under our Feet*, becauſe *the corruptible body preſſeth down the Soul*: but the nature and counſels of God, who can know, except himſelf give wiſdom?

(3.) The *Heathen* have *groped*, as in the dark, in ſeeking after the knowledge of theſe things: they have become *vain in their imaginations* of the Deity, and *their fooliſh heart was darkned*, ſo that *to them* theſe things were in a *great meaſure* inviſible, though not altogether.

(4.) What *diſcovery* we have of theſe things comes

comes from *God himself*, teaching us to know him either by the *light of Nature*, as in the *Gentiles*, or by the light of his *Word* and *Spirit* as in us *Christians*. In *themselves* therefore, and to our *corrupt* nature these are *invisible* things.

How *wonderful* therefore is the *nature* of that God that hath *set Man upon Earth to seek after himself*! the secrets of Nature either through *modesty* or *surliness* seem unwilling to discover themselves unto us; how much more unsearchable are the invisible things of God! How necessary therefore is the *study* of God's Works! *The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein*: and though *the bruitish man knoweth not, neither will the fool consider*, yet *whoso is wise will observe these things*. How *useful* then is the observation of the *Lord's day*! in which, though we have a *greater* mercy to celebrate than the work of *Creation*, yet that and the other works of God ought *then* especially to be considered by us. How *merciful* is God that hath given us such *advantages* to know him! that hath distinguished us from other Animals by giving us *Reason*; yea hath advanced us above the *Heathen*, by giving us that *Divine revelation* that affords us more clear discoveries of God than other Nations have been blessed with. How great *engagements* hath God hereby laid upon us

to entertain juſt and worthy thoughts of Him, to expreſs theſe by an *aweful love* to himſelf, and a religious *obedience* to his commands! And finally how *inexcuſable* ſhall we be, if we *neglect* ſo many advantages, and *ſlight* ſo many engagements which God hath laid upon us by the diſcoveries he hath made of Himſelf, and his will unto us: Which leads me to,

The Second *General* in the Text, The *Inference* from the precedent Propoſition, that *God hath left Mankind without Apologie or excuſe in their ſins.*

As there is nothing more *uſual* with Men, when they have followed the perverſe ſwing of their own inclinations in doing evil, than to *ſeek excuſes* to evade the terrors of their own Conſcience, and the convictions of the Word of God; ſo I know nothing more *neceſſary* in them that make it their work to *win Souls*, than to take all advantages to *drive* ſinners out of their *ſtrong holds*, and to ſtrip them of thoſe *Fig-leaves*, with which they ſeek to cover the deformity of their nakedneſs.

Now if a Man that reſolves to live and dye in ſin, will *coyn* an excuſe for his *ill living*, he muſt either plead that he hath lived ſo ill for want of *means of knowledge* to ſhew him better courſes: Or that though he knew better things, he had not

*encourage-*

*encouragement* enough ſet before him to *preponderate* the *pleaſures* and *profits* of ſin: Or that though he knew ſomething of that alſo, yet he was ſhut up under ſuch *ſervility of will*, that he could do no more than a *dead man*, in hearkning to God's voice, and running the way of his Commandments: Or that though he had a *little ſtrength* and *freedom* in his will, yet where this fell ſhort he was *left by God* to himſelf, and had no *offer of grace* to aſſiſt him in doing his duty: Or laſtly, that God was an *auſtere Maſter*, and propoſed unto him *unpracticable commands*, and required of him things *ſimply impoſſible*, and therefore it was in vain to attempt to pleaſe this God. If *any* of theſe Pleas would hold good, a ſinner might have ſomewhat to ſay for himſelf; but if *all* of them fail him, as I ſhall now endeavour to ſhew, then is he left *without Apologie*.

Firſt then, I ſay that no Man ſhall be able to plead for himſelf *want of knowledge*, or that he took ſuch bad courſes becauſe he knew no better. For,

(1.) God generally gives Men *capacities* to underſtand the *neceſſary* points of our *faith*. Though all Men have not quickneſs of parts to give a rational account of the niceties of S. *Athanaſius* his Creed, yet if they be not born natural *fools* or *ideots*, they are capable of that knowledge that will make them *wiſe unto Salvation*.

(2.) Of them that are of *mean capacities* naturally, God doth not expect the *ſame* attainments as to *clearneſs* of knowledge, as he doth from them whom he better *qualified* for it. If he that received but *one talent* had made proportionable advantage of it, he would not have been condemned as an *evil and ſlothful ſervant*, although he did not anſwer the profit that was made by him to whom *five* were committed: In this caſe that holds good, *If there be firſt a willing mind, it is accepted, according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not.*

(3.) God hath not been wanting to the World in bleſſing it with *ſufficient means of knowledge.* In the beginning Men were moſtly left to that *Law* of God written upon their *hearts*, which was not *ſo much* obliterated as it hath been *ſince* through the *abounding* of iniquity. To this were ſometimes added *immediate* diſcoveries of God's will from Heaven upon *ſpecial emergencies*. Afterward they had *Moſes* and the *Prophets*, to whom the *Church* of God was to *hearken*. In theſe *laſt days God hath ſpoken unto us by his own Son*, the great *Prophet* of the Church. And now in the *evening* of the World, when the *ſhadows* are extended, God hath bleſſed us with more *eminent* gifts beſtowed upon Men, to relieve the Church againſt the ſubtil attempts of *Hereticks*, and the open affronts

fronts of *Atheiſts*. So that God is not an auſtere Maſter, *reaping where he ſowed not.*

(4.) I believe that God *accepts* Men of *diſadvantagious education*, according to what he hath *given* them. As he hath not given all Men the advantages that might make them *able* Divines, or *great* Scholars; ſo he doth not expect that *diſtinct* and *unerring* knowledge of the *criticiſms* of our faith in unlearned Mechanicks, as in thoſe that are bred up in the *Schools of the Prophets*.

Secondly, Nor ſhall any Man be able to plead that he continued to be bad, becauſe he wanted *encouragement* to make him *better*: that he found nothing ſufficient to *deter* him from wickedneſs, or to *invite* him to a good life. For,

(1.) The *joys of Heaven* do certainly outweigh the *pleaſures* and *profits* of ſin: if the *Soul* be nobler than the *Body*, if the enjoyment of *God* be more comprehenſive than *Creature*-comforts, if *durable* riches and righteouſneſs be to be prefer'd before *uncertain* riches that take to themſelves *wings*, then is there no diſpute in the caſe.

(2.) The *torments of Hell* exceed the *trouble* that either *is*, or is *fancied* in a *religious* courſe of life: If a *worm* corroding the *conſcience*, and the *ſmoke* of torment aſcending for *ever and ever*, exceed not the pains of *watching* and *praying*, and together with

with this, all the *reproaches* of Christ, and *troubles* that remain us in the wilderness of this world; then let Men choose the *cutting* off a *principal* member of the Body, rather than a *prick* with a *Pin*.

(3.) God hath set before us Heaven as attainable, and Hell as avoidable upon *fair and feazible terms*: even the terms of the Covenant of Grace, *Repentance, Faith, and new Obedience*: and he that will not on these terms close with God, *How shall he escape if he neglect so great Salvation?*

(4.) He hath laid *sufficient grounds* whereupon to build a *firm belief* of these joys and torments: If the constant *testimony* of the *Word* of God, if the universal *consent* of all *Nations*, if the *witness* of Mens *consciences* in the case, if *reasons* drawn from the consideration of the *Divine attributes* will prevail with our judgments, then can no Man plead that he therefore *slighted* the offers of the Gospel, because he could see no *reason* to believe the *reality* thereof.

Thirdly, Nor can any Man plead that though he knew his duty, and had encouragement set before him to do it, yet he was shut up under the *impotency* and *servility* of his *will*, so that all good exhortations were but like commanding a *dead* Man to arise and walk.

(1.) It is plain that God endued Man with *perfect* freedom of will in his first *Creation*; this being

ing a neceſſary attendant upon a *reaſonable* agent, that he ſhould be *ſpontaneous* in his choice & actions.

(2.) We *ſtill* find *freedom* in our will as to *natural actions*. What Man will pretend that he cannot go to Bed or riſe, walk or ſit ſtill, go abroad or abide at home at his own pleaſure, and that he hath any conſtraint laid upon him to encline him one way or the other in ſuch things?

(3.) Nor can *temptations force* the will of Man to ſin. The Devil may enveagle us by his *ſuggeſtions*, wicked Men may *betray* us by their ill *examples* and *advice*: but if when the Prince of the World cometh, he found *nothing in us* of a complying principle, he would ſpend all his *fiery darts* in vain. He may *tempt*, but he cannot *force* us.

(4.) And we reaſonably believe what *impotency* is in the will to chooſe good and refuſe evil, to proceed from *cuſtom* and *habit* in ſin, and not from any *reſtraint* laid upon the will by God. If a ſluggard turn upon his Bed, as a *Door upon his Hinges*, and ſay he *cannot* riſe and work. If a common ſwearer, or drunkard, or unclean perſon will tell us, that they *cannot* forbear ſuch practice, we may anſwer them, *Non poſſe prætenditur cùm non velle in cauſâ eſt.*

(5.) When the moſt *wiſe* and *juſt* God ſets before us his *commands* backt with *promiſes* and *threatnings*, when he ſets before us *fire and water*, *life* and

*death*, and bids us *chooſe* the one, and *refuſe* the other: when he *exhorts* us to believe, and tells us we ſhall be *damned* if we hearken not; doth not this argue that God deals with Man as a *reaſonable* Creature, and a *free agent*, capable of *chooſing* and *acting* freely?

(6.) And when God doth by his grace *draw* a Man unto himſelf from the error of his ways, we believe that he doth not offer any *force* unto the *will*, and make him ceaſe to do evil, and learn to do well *againſt* his will; but that he begins with *convincing* a Man's *judgment* of the error and danger of his former courſes, alluring him with the beauty and neceſſity of holineſs, and then proceeds ſweetly to *encline* the *will* to follow the dictates of the underſtanding ſo enlightned: ſo that ſtill we are a *willing* People, whether we proceed in the ways of *Ruine* or of *Happineſs*.

(7.) Let any Man *try* whether in reference to *particular* acts of ſin it be *ſimply* impoſſible for him to refrain for a time, yea when meaner conſiderations than thoſe of Heaven and Hell are the motive: If the preſence of a *grave* and *good* man will make men take truce with their luſts for a time, if a *wager*, a *friend*, a *bargain* will make a man to *compound* with his appetite, and to be *ſober* for a time, ſhall not the weightier motives of the Word of God be as prevalent with us?

(8.) Le-

(8.) Let us *up and be doing, and the Lord will be with us*; we therefore know not how much is in the power of *humble* and *ſerious reſolutions*, becauſe one of theſe qualifications is moſtly wanting in our reſolutions: *The Sword of the Lord and of Gideon* too muſt be drawn; and then who are thoſe Hoſts of *Midian* that ſhall oppoſe us in the ways of God?

(9.) Therefore the *ſervility* of Man's will through the fall, will *excuſe* no Man before God's Tribunal, that hath lived and died in ſin. No man ſhall be able to plead, Lord I was *convinced* of the odiouſneſs of diſhoneſty, but yet my will *forced* me to be a knave; I was convinced of the deſirableneſs of Heaven, and I *did* what I *could* to come thither, but all in *vain*, for I was ſubject to *ſervility* and *impotency* of will, I did in vain *ſtrive againſt the ſtream*: But this will be the more clear by what follows.

Fourthly, No man can plead that he hath wanted the *offer of aſſiſtance* from the *Spirit of God* to *enable* him to pleaſe God, and to *bring* him to Heaven. That we are not ſhut up under a *neceſſity of ſinning*, I believe as before; and yet that we are not *ſufficient of our ſelves to do that which is good*, I alſo believe: but whether God be wanting to help our infirmities is the Queſtion? To which the anſwer is, that ſpeaking of *our ſelves* that live under the *means of grace* (for, *what have we to do to judge them that are without?*)

*out*?) no Man ſhall be able to plead that God hath been wanting to him to offer him *aſſiſtance* to enable him to *pleaſe* him, and to *walk* in his ways.

(1.) I believe that together with the *ordinances* of God goes along his *holy Spirit*, offering *grace* unto us, and *ſoliciting* us to accept thereof: that the promiſe hereof was *ſealed* unto us in our *baptiſm*, and the accompliſhment of this promiſe we find daily in attending upon other Ordinances in our *adult* eſtate: and that for this reaſon the Apoſtle diſtinguiſheth the Goſpel from the Law, in calling it *the miniſtration of life, and a quickning ſpirit*, 2 Cor. 3. 6, 8.

(2.) We may alſo find at *other times* the ſpirit of God *moving upon the waters* of our Souls, in our *ſecret receſſes*. When we *commune with our own heart and are ſtill*; *convincing* us of the error of our ways, *perſwadeing* and *moving* us to exchange them for better: Hereby it both *prepares* us to receive benefit by the Word preached, and alſo *ſeconds* what we have heard, that it may become effectual:

(3.) If at any time this ſpirit *withdraw* it ſelf and *ſuſpend* its motions, it is then when we have *reſiſted* its operations in us, and thereby *grieved* it by neglecting our own duty and intereſt. Even *good* men find theſe withdrawings after the *groſſer* and more *wilful* ſorts of ſins, as *David* when he prays for *reſtoring* theſe eſtabliſhments of the *free ſpirit*: and from

*wicked*

*wicked* men he *wholly* and *finally* departs, when they have *obſtinately* refuſed to accept of his counſel, and then he *leaves them to their own hearts luſts*.

(4.) But he mercifully continues his *ordinances* among us, that if it be not our own fault, we may not want the workings of his Spirit. He hath promiſed to be with his Ordinances, and the diſpenſation and diſpenſers thereof to the *end of the World*: and his continuing theſe amongſt us, doth ſhew that he *ſtands at the door and knocks*.

(5.) And he hath promiſed that he will *never fail us nor forſake us*. I believe God never caſt off that man that had not firſt *wilfully* and *obſtinately* caſt off him: nor that the *frailties* of the fleſh deprive us of his *comforting* and *quickning* workings, but he will ſtill be ready to ſtand by us and ſupport us, and if we neglect our duty, it ſhall not be for want of help offered us by God's Spirit to do it.

Fifthly, Nor ſhall any man be able to plead that God propoſed unto him *commands* that were *ſimply unpracticable*, or propoſed ſalvation unto him upon terms to which it was *impoſſible* for him to come up.

(1.) Indeed 'tis true God propoſeth unto us ſuch *Precepts* in his Law and Goſpel as are very *exact* and *perfect*: it being inconſiſtent with the abſolute *perfection* of God's holineſs to propoſe unto us any Law, but that which is like himſelf; and the

exactneſs of the Law at once *upbraids* us with our defects, and thereby keeps us *humble*, and alſo *ſtirs us up* to labour to be *perfect*, *even as our heavenly Father is perfect*. Thus the faireſt *Copy* is beſt to write after, though a Learner cannot expect to come up to a *perfect* imitation thereof.

(2.) But 'tis as true that we are free from the Law, as a *covenant of works*: ſo that we are no more to expect *life* and happineſs, upon condition of *unerring obedience*, or to fear *death* upon the *leaſt* default, in continuing in all things that are written in the Law to do them: from the *curſe* of the Law *Chriſt* hath delivered us by being made *a curſe for us*, and from its *ſevere exaction* by making a new and *gracious covenant* with us.

(3.) So that now the *great* thing God requires is *ſincere deſires* and *hearty endeavours* to pleaſe him, ſuch as reſult from true *love* and *gratitude*: that when we do *amiſs* and fall ſhort of our duty, we be truly *penitent* for it, and fly to the *mercy* of God, and the *merits* of Jeſus Chriſt for pardon; that for ſins of *daily* incurſion we take this courſe in our *daily* prayers, and after more *eminent* ſins that we be more *ſolemnly* humbled before Almighty God: that we do not *allow* our ſelves in our defects, much leſs *rolle ſin as a ſweet morſel under our tongue*, but that we *bewail* our defects, and be daily *preſſing* forward toward *perfection*.

(4.) Upon

(4.) Upon *theſe terms* I believe God doth *accept us in the beloved*, our *ſins* being pardon'd through the *imputation* of Chriſt's righteouſneſs, apprehended by *faith*; and our *defects* in obedience winked at by the fatherly *indulgence* of a merciful God, who *ſpareth us even as a man ſpareth his own ſon that ſerveth him*, Mal. 3.17. And being placed under theſe terms we have ſo little temptation to ſhun the ſervice of God as of an *auſtere maſter* that will not be *pleaſed*, let us do what we can; that we have rather very great encouragement to *run the ways of Gods commandments* with *enlarged hearts*, and to have our ſouls carried as on the *Chariots of Aminadib*, as knowing that he is a *good Maſter*, a liberal *rewarder of them that diligently ſerve him*, and that his ſervice is *perfect freedom*.

To conclude, We ſee here the *infinite wiſdom* and *juſtice* of God in his dealings with Man, who gives him ſufficient *knowledge* of his duty & intereſt, gives him ſufficient *encouragement* to chooſe the good and refuſe the evil, leaves him under no *inſuperable indiſpoſition* for doing his duty, and requires of him nothing *ſimply impoſſible* for him to do. How *wiſe* then and *happy* are they that make a due uſe of theſe favours of God! that ſtudy not to *diſpute* the commands of God, or their *conſiſtency* with his *decrees*, but leave thoſe *ſecret things to the Lord*, and take care of thoſe *revealed* things that belong to us. How great

greater an *enemy* then is the Devil that befools us into these excuses that will signify nothing before the righteous Judge! that first endeavours to rob us of our *innocency* by his temptations, and then of the *only refuge* of sinners, *repentance*; by such suggestions as these: But such is his nature, he hath been a *lyar* and *deceiver from the beginning*. How great is the *folly* of those that hearken to these delusions! that *neglect* so great salvation through studying excuses to evade plain and necessary duties, at once arguing themselves out of their *reason*, while they seek to argue themselves out of a *capacity* to embrace and obey the Laws of their Maker.

Finally, how will the *righteous Judg* of all the earth be *justified in his sayings, and clear when he judgeth* the world! At present *wisdom is justified of all her children*: but then *every mouth shall be stopped, and the whole world be found guilty before God*: Then shall the Fig-leaves of *excuses* drop away, and Men be judged according to the *talents* committed to their trust.

God of his mercy make us so wise as to *prevent* the *severity* of that judgment by *repenting* and *amending* in due time. Now to the blessed and undivided Trinity, God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be given, as is most due, all honour and worship, and service, now and for ever, *Amen*.

THE END.